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Ministry of Forests

CHANGES SUPPORT TIMBER MARKETABILITY

VICTORIA – New legislation will allow environmental certification standards to be included in small business licences, helping to make the wood more attractive to buyers around the world, Forests Minister Michael de Jong announced today.

Under the legislation, the small business forest enterprise program will be able to require its licensees to meet the high standards of third-party certification agencies.

"The province is committed to sound forest and environmental management practices that are recognized both locally and internationally," de Jong said. "By responding to the market demand for certified wood, we are working to make our forest industry more globally competitive."

Allowing certification standards to be incorporated into small business licence conditions also builds on the small business program's other environmental measures.

The program has developed an environmental management system known as EMS, a series of procedures designed to ensure program managers and small business licensees meet environmental protection laws and standards. Implementation of that system recently resulted in the Chilliwack and Sunshine Coast forest districts' small business programs being certified by the International Standards Organization (ISO 14001). Such certifications are granted only after the independent organization has audited environmental standards.

Further certifications and performance audits of the small business program are expected over the course of the next two years in other forest districts.

The provisions for changes to small business licences were included in the forests statutes amendment act, 2002. The act also amends other aspects of legislation. These changes include:

- Specifying provisions for the surrender and extension of a timber sale licence under sections 58.1 and 77.1 of the Forest Act. These provisions are intended to ensure consistency in the administration of small business timber sale licences.
- Clarifying Section 79 of the Forest Act so former licence holders can access Crown land to carry out any forest management obligations remaining after their licence expires.
- Permitting adjustments to allowable annual cuts under the Forest Act to be pro-rated for the calendar year.

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